

ANN BAVENDER\*  
ANNE GOODWIN CRUMP\*  
VINCENT J. CURTIS, JR.  
RICHARD J. ESTEVEZ  
PAUL J. FELDMAN  
ERIC FISHMAN  
RICHARD HILDRETH  
FRANK R. JAZZO  
ANDREW S. KERSTING\*  
KATHRYN A. KLEIMAN  
EUGENE M. LAWSON, JR.  
HARRY C. MARTIN  
J. TODD METCALF\*  
GEORGE PETRUTSAS  
LEONARD R. RAISH  
JAMES P. RILEY  
KATHLEEN VICTORY  
HOWARD M. WEISS

\* NOT ADMITTED IN VIRGINIA

FLETCHER, HEALD & HILDRETH, P.L.C.

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

11th FLOOR, 1300 NORTH 17th STREET

ROSSLYN, VIRGINIA 22209-3801

(703) 812-0400

TELECOPIER

(703) 812-0486

INTERNET

office@fhh-telcomlaw.com

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

FRANK U. FLETCHER  
(1939-1985)  
ROBERT L. HEALD  
(1956-1983)  
FRANK ROBERSON  
(1936-1961)  
RUSSELL ROWELL  
(1948-1977)

RETIRED  
EDWARD F. KENEHAN  
CONSULTANT FOR INTERNATIONAL AND  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS  
SHELDON J. KRYSS  
U. S. AMBASSADOR (ret.)  
OF COUNSEL  
EDWARD A. CAINE\*  
JOHN JOSEPH SMITH\*  
WRITER'S DIRECT

0480

September 30, 1997

**VIA HAND DELIVERY**

Mr. William F. Caton  
Acting Secretary  
Federal Communications Commission  
1919 M Street, N.W. - Room 222  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: PR Docket No. 92-257  
RM-7956, 8031, 8352

Dear Mr. Caton:

On behalf of Ross Engineering Co. ("Ross"), we are filing an original and four (4) copies of its Reply Comments in the above cited matters.

If there are any questions, do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,

FLETCHER, HEALD & HILDRETH, PLC



Leonard Robert Raish  
Counsel for Ross Engineering Co.

LRR:cej  
Enclosures

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**Federal Communications Commission**

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20554

ORIGINAL

In the Matter of )  
 )  
Amendment of the Commission's )  
Rules Concerning Maritime )  
Communications )

PR Docket No. 92-257  
RM-7956, 8031, 8352

To: The Commission

**REPLY COMMENTS BY ROSS ENGINEERING CO.**

In its Comments on the Second Further Notice in this proceeding, Ross Engineering Co. ("Ross") stressed the importance of marine safety and use of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) for this purpose. Ross also called attention to IMO NAV-43 WP.4, Revision of SOLAS Chapter 5 - Draft SOLAS Regulation 20 dated July 16, 1997 with regard to mandatory carriage of AIS for safety. Ross commented on its very successful experimental operations on the 12.5 KHz offsets from the 25 KHz public correspondence channels operated by GTE in the Tampa Bay without even one incident of interference.

Appended to the Comments filed by the U.S. Coast Guard was a copy of their Petition to the FCC for Rulemaking "to establish and make available VHF maritime narrowband (interstitial) channels for AIS and related safety systems used in new and existing vessel traffic services (VTS) and in nationwide ports and waterways."<sup>1</sup> Ross concurs with both the Comments of the Coast Guard as well as the Petition for

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<sup>1</sup>See Coast Guard Petition, page 1. The Petition is appended to the Coast Guard Comments in this proceeding.

Rulemaking appended to it.

Noting the above, Ross would go on to say that, in its view, the Coast Guard is compromising more than necessary in the proposal section of its Petition for Rulemaking wherein it requests the "FCC to make available interleaved 12.5 KHz channels between public correspondence channels . . . . for AIS and related PAWSS and VTS upgrade purposes on a shared basis with public correspondence or other uses . . . . . (emphasis added).<sup>2</sup> Safety is paramount. The interstitial frequencies should be reserved until full deployment of AIS is accomplished. The unused interstitial frequencies can then be made available for public correspondence recognizing that two interstitial frequencies are allocated for AIS purposes in each region as proposed by the U.S. Coast Guard.<sup>3</sup> Except for this observation, which is based on the expertise and experience of Ross with AIS and the use of interstitial frequencies, as already stated, the comments of the Coast Guard are fully concurred with.

Ross has studied all the comments filed in this proceeding and finds a substantial commonality of views. For example, several have stated that incumbents should be catered to and/or protected. Several have stressed in varying terms that geographic areas should be based on the unique needs of the maritime services.

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<sup>2</sup>See Coast Guard Petition at para. 15. The Petition is appended to the Coast Guard comments in this proceeding.

<sup>3</sup>Two frequencies are required because of the need for overlapping continuous coverage of extended AIS service areas. In a continuous string of radio towers, the working frequency would alternate between the two AIS frequency channels.

Both Mobile Marine Radio and UTC stated this view with which Ross concurs fully.<sup>4, 5, 6</sup> While not of a direct concern to Ross, substantial interest in AMTS operations was expressed by some commenters.

While concurring in general with comments of MARITEL, Ross disagrees with the former's view as regards the use of 12.5 KHz "offset" channels.<sup>7</sup> Ross' views are (a) Public Coast station use of interstitial frequencies just now would be premature. Again, safety is paramount; (b) as stated above, once two AIS frequency channels per region are allocated, the remaining unused 12.5 KHz "offset" channels will be available for Public Coast Station use. In brief, provide for safety first and whatever channels are left can then be used by Public Coast Stations.

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<sup>4</sup>See Mobile Marine Radio, page 1 which states "While a generic mobile service may be appropriate in the interior Region, MMR urges the Commission to retain the maritime nature of operation on these frequencies [i.e., maritime channels] along the coastal zone and along inland waterways."

<sup>5</sup>See UTC, page 5 which states "UTC opposes the Commission's proposals to license VHF Public Coast spectrum in broad geographic regions based on United States Coast Guard Districts and recommends that this spectrum be licensed in geographic areas that are tailored to meet the reasonable needs of users near navigable waterways."

<sup>6</sup>See Mobile Marine Radio, page 8 where it is stated ". . . the Commission should consider maintaining the maritime service as a distinct service area, with the maritime service area being defined by the 72-mile band extending from navigable waterways adopted in the First Report and Order in this proceeding, and a second non-maritime service area comprised of the regional service area such as proposed in this notice."

<sup>7</sup>See MARITEL, page 12.

In conclusion, Ross urges the Commission to take these Reply Comments into account.

Respectfully submitted,

ROSS ENGINEERING CO. INC.

By: Leonard Robert Raish  
Leonard Robert Raish

Its Attorney

FLETCHER, HEALD & HILDRETH, P.L.C.  
1300 North 17th Street - 11th Floor  
Rosslyn, Virginia 22209  
(703) 812-0400

September 30, 1997

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## CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Chellestine Johnson, a secretary in the law firm of Fletcher, Heald & Hildreth, P.L.C., do hereby certify that copies of the foregoing Reply Comments were sent this 30th day of September, 1997, by first-class United States mail, postage prepaid, to:

Martin W. Bercovici  
Keller and Heckman, LLP  
1001 G Street, N.W., Suite 500 West  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
Attorney for Mobile Marine Radio, Inc.  
and Waterway Communications  
Systems, Inc.

Audrey P. Rasmussen  
O'Connor & Hannan LLP  
1919 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 800  
Washington, D.C. 20006-3483  
Attorney for Paging Systems Inc.

Russell H. Fox  
Jocelyn R. Roy  
Gardner, Carton & Douglas  
1301 K Street, N.W.  
Suite 900, East Tower  
Washington, D.C. 20005  
Attorneys for WJG Maritel Corp.

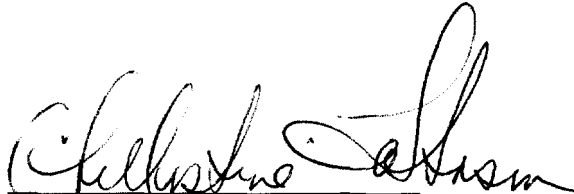
Mr. J. D. Hersey, Jr.  
Chief, Spectrum Management Division  
Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard  
G-SCT-2  
2100 Second Street, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20593-0001

Mark E. Crosby  
President/CEO  
Industrial Telecommunications Assoc.  
1110 N. Glebe Road, Suite 500  
Arlington, VA 22201

Samuel Klein, Chairman  
Council of Independent  
Communications Suppliers  
1110 N. Glebe Road, Suite 500  
Arlington, VA 22201

Jeffrey L. Sheldon  
Thomas E. Goode  
UTC, The Telecommunications Assoc.  
1140 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.  
Suite 1140  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Ron Haraseth  
Systems Analyst  
Information Services Division  
State of Montana  
Rm 229, Sam W. Mitch Bldg.  
Helena, MT 59620-0113



Chellestine Johnson